Chapter 6

6. HISTORY OF NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

6-1 Natural Resource Management Prior to 1982

An early fish and wildlife report (Fort Richardson, 1963) for Fort Richardson notes that the Alaskan Command required appointment of Conservation Officers and Wildlife Conservation Noncommissioned Officers throughout the command (thus including Fort Greely). From 1962 to1963, 30 members of the Alaskan Command were sent to a special conservation course at the University of Alaska. Twice a year, each soldier in Alaska was required to receive instruction on hunting and fishing regulations and conservation practices. In 1963, conservation was a staff responsibility of the Provost Marshal. At that time five noncommissioned officers were assigned full-time duties as Army Wildlife Agents. Most of the wildlife conservation effort was on Fort Richardson.

Early projects on Fort Greely (Fort Richardson, 1963) included:

- Clearing streams blocked by winter military exercises
- Bison management including construction of a corral for transplanting, assistance with bison hunts, clearing Big Delta runway of bison, aerial census, salt block placement, and use of a wrecker to rescue a bison trapped in a well

- Use of Army helicopters to stock lakes
- Assistance with enforcement check points along the Denali Highway
- Stocking Bolio Lake with 10,000 rainbow fingerlings

In 1972, the Alaska Command (ALCOM) awarded Fort Greely the Outstanding Conservation Award. ALCOM also recognized the individual accomplishments of an enlisted soldier at Fort Greely in the natural resources program (Quirk et al., 1978). Fort Greely hired its first civilian natural resources specialist in 1977 and its first wildlife biologist in 1981.

In 1978, natural resources specialists from the three Alaska Command installations combined to draft a *Natural Resources Conservation Program* (Quirk et al., 1978). Spiers (1982) completed the first wildlife management plan for Fort Greely. The Fort Greely program operated under a statewide cooperative agreement between 172nd Infantry Brigade, the USFWS, and ADF&G. It was signed in 1960 and has been updated regularly.

6-2 The 1982 Fish and Wildlife Plan

The Fish and Wildlife Management Plan for Fort Greely (Spiers, 1982) outlined the following objectives.

- To maximize the opportunity to hunt, fish, and trap on Fort Greely
- To provide a quality experience of hunting, fishing, or trapping
- To ensure, wherever possible, that optimum numbers of managed species are maintained for their own benefit as well as man's
- To maximize opportunities for the public to view, photograph, and enjoy wildlife for recreational and educational purposes
- To eliminate or mitigate conflicts between wildlife resources and the military mission or man's use of Fort Greely
- To preserve wetlands and other areas critical to survival of certain species
- To establish annual work plans to accomplish the above

The Gerstle River Test Site and Main Post were not open to public hunting. GRTS was considered to have potential for management as a refuge.

Due to the size and biological diversity of the installation, the plan recommended vegetative communities of Fort Greely be mapped before a wildlife management plan was developed. These maps would be too large to include in the plan, but would be kept on file by the wildlife biologist.

To determine wildlife use, the plan recommended a biologist make overflights of Fort Greely on a quarterly basis for at least two years. It also recommended that hunters and trappers be required to submit a report of animals taken and where they were taken.

The installation was divided into eight units by natural and man-made features for management purposes. ADF&G had sole responsibility for managing fish and game on Fort Greely prior to completion of the plan. Their efforts were largely stocking and monitoring of fish, wolf control, and big game census. Due to the unique management requirements of Fort Greely, it was proposed the post be made a separate management unit. This did not occur.

According to the 1982 Fish and Wildlife Plan, wildlife law enforcement was the responsibility of Military Police game wardens and wildlife enforcement officers within the Alaska Department of Public Safety. Military Police game wardens maintained records on individually claimed trapping areas and gave safety lectures to those who hunted on Fort Greely. While the 172nd Infantry Brigade was responsible for publishing general regulations governing hunting, fishing, and trapping on Army lands in Alaska, the Fort Greely Military Police published a supplement specific to Fort Greely.

Lack of data prompted biologists to recommend preservation of habitats. As important wildlife use areas were identified, they were protected from Army actions. Limited harvest targeted surplus populations. A summary of information, as found in the 1982 Fish and Wildlife Plan, was provided for each species identified for inclusion into this group.

Caribou: The Delta caribou herd was characterized as being small and migratory, spending spring and summer in the foothill region of Trident Glacier and moving west of Fort Greely during winter. ADF&G estimated the herd contained 4,000 head in 1979, with a ratio of 63 calves to 100 cows. Fort Greely would make routine reconnaissance flights in mid-June and the following May to determine ratios. The difference would be used as an indicator of calf survival.

Dall Sheep: No information on population size or trend was available. Surveys were planned for summer of 1982 and January, early May, and June of 1983. Surveys would determine summer and winter range, location of mineral licks, and pre- and post-calving age structure and sex ratios. Annual surveys were planned for May and June thereafter. No factors were identified which could adversely affect the population.

Marten: Prime habitat was identified as black spruce-bog. Better habitat delineation was dependent on vegetation mapping. No surveys were planned.

Sharptail Grouse: The Buffalo Drop Zone was one known dancing ground. Spring surveys were planned to determine peak of courtship and count birds. Bison food plots were monitored to determine if they were used as sharptail dancing grounds.

Sandhill Cranes: Migration staging areas were known to exist on islands in the Delta River. Surveys were planned for fall 1982 to determine timing and extent of their use. Overflights of the Little Delta River and Delta Creek were planned for 1982 to determine if similar staging areas existed. Bombing and training exercises were prohibited near identified sites while cranes were present.

Trumpeter Swans: Although nesting sites were known to exist on Fort Wainwright, no surveys had been conducted on Fort Greely. Surveys of the Kettle Lakes in management units 5 and 6 were planned for July of each year.

Other Waterfowl: Surveys were conducted to identify favorite nesting sites. A nesting area was created at Canister Lake in 1983.

Raptors: No nesting sites for hawks, eagles, or peregrine falcons were known on Fort Greely. Nests identified during summer reconnaissance flights were protected from adverse Army actions.

Coyotes, red fox, and other furbearers were monitored annually. Scent stations were set up along Meadows Road and 33-Mile Loop to monitor coyote and red fox, while other furbearers were monitored using track count transects along Jarvis and 100-Mile Creeks.

Bison and moose were the only game species for which habitat manipulation was planned. The plan stated that bison calving grounds on the west bank of the Delta River were being overrun by woody species. About 50 acres of the area were aerial fertilized during the summer of 1981, with another 130 acres to be treated during summer 1982. The fertilizer was purchased using Army funds, while ADF&G contracted the aircraft. An additional 300 acres were to be burned during the summer of 1982. BLM would supervise the burning operation, with fire crews made up of Army personnel. There were plans to build an observation tower near large food plots at Meadows Road and the Delta River in spring 1983. An appendix to this plan included *A Bison Management Plan for Fort Greely, Alaska* (Kiker and Fielder, 1980) with two supplements, *A Management Plan to Reroute the Migration Pattern of the Delta Bison Herd* (Fielder, 1980) and *A General Plan for Expanding and Rehabilitating the Summer Range of the Delta Bison Herd* (Spiers, 1981).

Much less was known of the moose population on Fort Greely. Records of aerial censuses conducted by ADF&G in Game Management Unit 20D contain the only objective data available. Habitat manipulation was to be based on the results of vegetation mapping. Annual prescribed burning supervised by BLM and use of a hydro-ax were planned methods of manipulation. Annual surveys were planned for November. Plans were also proposed to radio-collar 15 moose with ADF&G to determine areas of seasonal concentration, home ranges, and if they were migratory.

The 1982 plan stated there were seven fishable lakes between Meadows Road and Old Richardson Highway. Many lakes on Fort Greely were shallow enough to freeze solid in the winter. There were plans to install wind-powered aerators to prevent freeze up. Natural reproduction of fish was negli-

gible, and ADF&G stocked lakes when fish were available. Three other ponds were used by the state to rear grayling for stocking in other state waters. The plan called for stocking grayling, silver salmon, and rainbow trout. Lakes would be stocked on a rotating basis, with about half being stocked each spring or summer. Each lake would be gillnetted in the fall to evaluate stocking levels and fish condition.

The 1982 plan included a creel census on Fort Greely lakes to determine the amount of fishing pressure. Some lakes to the west of the Delta River in unit 5 contained natural populations of longnose suckers and northern pike. Fish surveys were planned for these lakes in fall 1982 or 1983. There were no roads to the lakes, but the plan stated anglers would be made aware of the location, condition, and fish populations at the lakes.

6-3 Cooperative Agreement 1986

In July 1986, USARAK entered into a Cooperative Agreement with USFWS and ADF&G (U.S. Army, 1986). The main goal of the tripartite Cooperative Agreement was development of fish and wildlife management programs. The parties defined certain unique or sensitive habitats, including those for the Delta bison herd, calving and post-calving caribou, and roosting sandhill cranes. The Cooperative Agreement called for the parties to cooperatively inventory fish and wildlife on Fort Greely. Under the agreement, the Army committed to:

- Monitoring radio-collared moose by helicopter to better understand seasonal movements, contingent upon ADF&G's purchase and emplacement of collars
- Assisting ADF&G in monitoring radio-collared bison by helicopter to locate distinct herds for enumeration
- Conducting a study of the grizzly bear population on the north face of the Alaska Range, including Fort Greely in cooperation with the ADF&G

6-4 1994 Fort Greely Proposed Resource Management Plan– Final Environmental Impact Statement

The Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement was written to fulfill the mandate of the Military Lands Withdrawals Act of 1986. The document was the result of work by a joint BLM-USARAK planning team that consulted with the public throughout the process. The plan proposes a variety of non-military uses, recognizing the primary military purpose of the withdrawn lands. This INRMP uses the *1994 Fort Greely Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement* as a base on which proposed management activities are built upon.

6-5 1994 to Present Management of Natural Resources

In 1996, the Integrated Training Area Management (ITAM) program was initiated on Fort Greely. This INRMP provides a summary of planned actions to fully implement the ITAM program on Fort Greely (see ITAM summary in Section 10-2).